

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 647

Co-Chairs Sen. Fonfara and Rep. D'Agostino, and Ranking Members Sen. Witkos and Rep. Cheeseman, and members of the General Law Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 647. My name is Tony Karlowicz. I am a resident of Windsor and CEO and Co-founder of Back East Brewery in Bloomfield. I'm writing to you today in support of this legislative proposal, specifically the increase of direct to consumer limits for off-premise consumption at Connecticut breweries, and the exemption for craft breweries from paying an excise tax for on-premise consumption sales. We appreciate the governor for having this as part of his budget proposal.

I started Back East in 2012 with my cousin and partner Edward Fabrycki. We were one of the earlier breweries in this latest wave of growth. Collectively we've grown an industry from almost nothing to an integral part of the culture and economy of Connecticut. Many CT breweries have gained national recognition and created jobs and a sense of pride for local products (which sadly is often lacking in CT). Even at Back East we have won many national awards for our beer and regularly have customers coming in from surrounding states to purchase our beer.

The Connecticut craft beer industry is unlike any other, it's a brotherhood and sisterhood where we share one commonality - beer. We are all competitors, yet the comradery between all of us is unparalleled. And, we employ nearly 5,000 people statewide.

We support every single other brewery in our state, from brewing beer collaborations to sharing ingredients, equipment, ideas, and recipes, and assist new breweries as they open and operate. We are supporters of our CT Brewers Guild, our governing association dedicated to protecting and promoting our industry, where we are working cohesively to make this industry better and are assisting with its continual growth.

As our brewery strives to remain competitive in this ever-growing market, it's necessary to modernize our states alcohol laws. Our brewery works/plans to work with our wholesalers, distributors, restaurants and bars, and package stores within our three-tiered system and appreciate our partnerships with them.

The added benefits of increasing direct-to-consumer sales limits for the state of Connecticut are tremendous and It will only continue to add to the massive economic impact that our industry has on our state, allow our brewery to reinvest in our business, create more jobs, increase our production, and simply sell more of our product.

Increasing the limits on the direct to consumers sales will allow my brewery to compete with breweries in our surrounding states and keep our consumer's purchases and money here in Connecticut.

I would like to thank you all for your efforts in supporting our craft beer industry and hope that you proceed with increasing the limits for direct to consumer sales for off-premise consumption at Connecticut breweries.

Sincerely,

Tony Karlowicz

Co-Founder, Back East Brewery